

# metconnexion

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## FEATURING

CATHERINE HUTTON, NATHAN VEALL, PETER ENSOR, JOANNE SIDDALL, BART WOODHOUSE,  
DANIEL PRATT MORRIS-CHAPMAN & AMANDA MARTIN



*The Word*



# EDITORIAL

Marian Izzard

Many apologies for this delayed edition of MET Connexion. Thank you for your patience! You will find all the renewal details enclosed with this mailing to renew your partnership with MET.

I am pleased to share with you that I have now formally taken on the role as Editor of MET Connexion and look forward to developing this role in the coming year.

The theme for this edition is the Word. We celebrated the Word made flesh with the coming of Jesus as Immanuel - God with us - at Christmas. The Word which dwells among us comes alive in our hearts and lives as a lived out reality. This edition shares some of the lived out reality of 'the Word in action' from a variety of different perspectives.

Catharine Hutton, Superintendent Minister from Norwich shows us how the Word is active in East Anglia and how it has crossed culture and ignites mission amongst the Chinese community. Nathan Veall, a young member of MET from Cornwall shares how a historically Methodist understanding of the Bible has transformed his life. Peter Ensor, Supernumerary Minister in the Salisbury Circuit and former tutor at Cliff College writes on the threefold Word of God and unpacks some uses of the phrase 'the Word of God' in Christian theology. Joanne Siddall, Superintendent Minister in Rotherham 'Spreads the Word' as she takes the past into the present for the future in the market place in Rotherham. Bart Woodhouse, Pioneer Minister in Ebbsfleet in his article 'Cultural Humility, Kingdom Confidence', communicates how we need to recover our confidence in the transformative power of the gospel 'in a world that is becoming sickly with the opiate of relativism and meaninglessness'. Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman reveals how the dangers of postmodernism on theology are like a selfie gone too far. Amanda Martin shares the vision and impact of the Word in action at a recent church plant Connect@Tiviot Dale in Stockport, Greater Manchester. Kevin Jones' Bible Study is from Colossians 3: 'Developing Spiritual Fruit'.

We continue to uphold the Word of God as we remain faithful and true to it. As discussions and conversations in churches, circuits and districts continue on marriage and relationships, we commend the Remaining Faithful resources for your use. See page 27 for details.

Liverpool 200 is a two day conference over 28 - 29 May at Hope Chapel, Liverpool Hope University for church leaders and members to ignite a renewal of the Wesleyan vision, develop a fresh strategy and to explore opportunities for a turnaround plan for Methodism. Please see enclosed flier for details as well as the advert on Page 25.

We are, as always, most grateful for your support both prayerfully and financially for the work of MET.

Please also note the date of Saturday 18 July for our Remaining Faithful 'Moving Forward' event at Freshbrook Church, Swindon (further details on page 29).

Marian

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# FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

Derek Balsdon

Serving God through MET is a wonderful privilege. Being full-time with MET provides more time working from home, as well as greater opportunities for travelling to different parts of the Connexion. In October Hilary and I enjoyed going back to the Forest of Dean. On the Sunday morning Hilary played the organ and I preached at Drybook; despite its name, the living water of God's Spirit flowed and over 25% of the congregation came forward to receive anointing with oil and prayer to be filled afresh. It was good to reconnect with folk from my first Circuit appointment 25 years ago.

The Yorkshire North and East District held 'Flourish', a free District weekend at the Scarborough Spa in October, and invited me to go along with the MET resources stand. Over 1000 people of all ages attended a great weekend of fellowship, teaching and worship. When we were there for ECG most of the attendees already knew about MET, but that wasn't the case at this District Weekend. This provided many opportunities to share with people about our work, and to give out lots of MET Connexion's and Remaining Faithful resources. REVIVE, The MET Prayer Conference, was held at Willersley Castle. Paul and Tracey Critchley facilitated our drawing closer to God as we worshipped, and Kevin Jones' teaching helped us in our 'Walking with Jesus'. His teaching is in a new MET book 'Pursuing God: Seeking Intimacy with the Father'. As I did an initial proof-reading of the book, I felt challenged

and encouraged to pursue God even more. This year I will be sharing on the theme 'Walking in Forgiveness', and I hope to see some of you there.

A significant amount of my time is focused on marriage and relationships. During the autumn I received lots of emails and phone calls from people who are very concerned about Methodism, and questioning their future within our denomination. I have sought to offer pastoral care to each troubled person. You are welcome to contact me by email or phone to share your concerns, and feel free to pass my details on to others who may appreciate someone to confidentially share with. We are forming a database of concerned people, and we hope to plot on a map where each person lives, and then we may be able to facilitate those within a local area being able to offer support to one another, or even to form a 'class meeting' for fellowship. I have helped to compile and distribute the resources for the Regional Gatherings, and have been able to attend two relatively near to where we live. These have provided a great opportunity for concerned people to share together, to hear more about what MET is doing, to worship God and to pray. In the early part of 2020, we would like to have more Regional Gatherings across the Connexion, so please contact me if you are interested in hosting one.

In early November I went to the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit to speak at a

Marriage and Relationships meeting; the other speaker was Rev Mark Rowland from Dignity and Worth. Your prayers for me that evening were answered, God certainly helped me share biblically based concerns about 'God in love unites us' and to respond to questions afterwards. There was a good level of respect and grace, even though there were major differences of opinion. One of the attendees spoke passionately about Methodism being an inclusive church; I followed this by saying that it might not be inclusive of people like me who do not support same-sex marriage or cohabiting!

One disappointment was cancelling Digging For Treasure due to insufficient bookings, the feedback suggested the location wasn't convenient for many people, but all is not lost. The teaching that the contributors were planning to share on the day is being put into another MET book entitled 'The Message of Ruth Today', and will soon be published. With Ruth being the Bible Month for 2020, this should be a beneficial resource for preachers, small groups and personal study.

For a few years MET has been looking to have a stronger relationship with 3Generate, the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly, so I volunteered for 2019. I was on the stewarding team, and was able to get a glimpse of several different 3 Generate events. This year's theme was 'Where is God in my story?' My hope and prayer is that it has helped young people in their journey of Christian faith.

Whotway, the new youth resource, is a key means through which MET is seeking to help young people grow in their faith and discipleship. There are further details elsewhere in this magazine. A number of churches have been using this video-based course with their youth groups. Kevin Lee, the Children's and Youth Worker, at Market Drayton Methodist Church writes:

*"I have used many of the WHOTWAY video clips with our secondary aged junior church group over the last few months. They have really engaged with the relevant topics and the way that the clips are presented (with the filmed students asking questions about the topics being discussed) has absolutely led to our young people voicing questions of their own. The group prompts placed within the video clips have led to great discussions and we look forward to the next series being uploaded! Many thanks!"*

Some churches are using it for adult fellowship groups; the videos make great discussion starters. If you have 'own arrangement' Sunday services, the videos could be used instead of a sermon. Whotway series 1 was launched in April 2019 and series 2 in the Autumn of 2019. To watch and download visit [whotway.com](http://whotway.com)

Thank you so much for all the support that you give to Hilary and I, and to MET, especially financially and prayerfully. The help that we are able to offer to one another is a great blessing, especially within this challenging season of church life. As I conclude, the words of Proverbs 3:5-6 have come to mind, about trusting fully in the Lord, acknowledging Him, and His directing our paths. Wonderful words to put into practice day by day.

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Derek Balsdon



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2020



10th October, 2020

**WORD 2020 SPEAKER REV TIM WOOLLEY**  
THE KING'S CROSS CHURCH, DONCASTER

17th October, 2020

**DIGGING FOR TREASURE: WORD AND SPIRIT TOGETHER**  
METHODIST CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

30th October - 1st November, 2020

**REVIVE, THE MET PRAYER WEEKEND:**  
**SPEAKER REV DEREK BALSODN**  
WILLERSLEY CASTLE

FULL DETAILS AND BOOKING FORMS  
AVAILABLE ON THE MET WEBSITE:  
[METHODISTEVANGELICALS.ORG.UK](http://METHODISTEVANGELICALS.ORG.UK)

## DEVELOPMENT WORKER FUTURE APPOINTMENTS

Please pray for Derek Balsdon, our Development Worker, as he ministers around the Connexion. Please consider how your church or circuit could be encouraged by his ministry.

### March

**7th** | Launceston Circuit, Local Preachers Study Day

**8th** | Launceston Central

**Fri 13th - Sun 15th** | Firefest @ Knutsford Methodist Church

### April

**14th - 19th** | ECG Scarborough

### May

**15th - 16th** | MET Executive @ Cliff College

**22nd - 25th** | Cliff College Festival

**28th - 29th** | Liverpool 200: Renewing the Wesleyan Vision

### June

**13th** | St. Andrew's Methodist Church, Eastleigh, Study Day

**14th** | Eastleigh

**25th - 2nd July** | Methodist Conference: Telford

# THE WORD - ACTIVE IN EAST ANGLIA

*Catherine Hutton*

### HOW THE WORD HAS CROSSED CULTURE, IGNITING MISSION

'We preach Christ and him crucified'. This message of faith was written in a mural at the front of the Methodist Chapel in Fylingthorpe where I spent my childhood years and first found faith. It was a message which was to become embedded deep within my heart as I absorbed it week by week, listening to the liberal sermons of the 1980s and wondering how the disconnect had happened between the focus on Salvation and just 'being good people'.

Fast forward 30 years and a move even further east than the North Yorkshire Coast and we arrive in Norwich where the power of the Word of God is very much alive and active. The power of the Cross to release people from their addictions and griefs and hang-ups is being spoken with confidence. This has required faithful ministers who have loved the Word of God and have trusted in his goodness even when faced with opposition and perceived cultural irrelevance, ministers who have seen potential and offered a home to new congregations which have been forming organically within our communities.

Sprowston Methodist has attracted people whose love for the Word has led them to a natural charismatic expression of faith and deep love for and belief in the power of prayer, often courting ridicule from other churches in the circuit

(of which I am the Superintendent). It is within Sprowston that we find the origins of our Chinese Heritage congregation, which had nested within Sprowston's hospitality for 12 years until the minister, pastor of the congregation and the superintendent looked at further opportunities to develop the work. A circuit church was about to be vacated on a site near the hospital and the university and the reins of stewardship and leadership were passed to Pastor Edmond Tsui and the Chinese Heritage congregation - which is now a church.

There are many cultures held among the people, both socially and geographically with around 12 languages being spoken. The unity is in Jesus and on 3 Sundays of a month the service is conducted entirely in Mandarin with Cantonese translation. The message is always centred on the Word and a conservative approach to scripture is maintained. There is an expectation that God will transform lives through his Word of Life and new converts are regularly made. Five preachers are currently in training, some in English & some in their native language. Along with Pastor Edmond, I help in the training; offering encouragement and advice as we would with any preacher. We have struggled to find evangelical preachers to be mentors for our newest recruits. These fledgling preachers are hungry to preach the Word of God, having seen the difference it makes to their own lives.

Hearing the preachers in Mandarin and with minimal interpretation, the joy and love for Jesus shines out and the soft praying tones of intimacy with which the congregation are led in prayer reduce me to tears. The Word is more incisive than the mere sense of hearing the words. Billy Wong whispered to me mid-sermon, 'Livia is speaking about the haemorrhaging woman and about reaching out in faith to touch and trust Jesus for all we need.' Billy was one of the founder members of the church in Norwich. He has since gone to glory, but was known in the community of Sprowston for his chip shop and for his faith. His own funeral was packed with a multinational gathering of people who loved Billy and all heard an evangelistic message.

It is through people like Billy Wong, Kit Holland and Livia Tan that the gospel message has been able to travel around East Anglia. Pastor Edmond Tsui regularly shares his story of faith with people he may meet as he spends time in the areas where Chinese people gather, or helping people as they negotiate health care or insurance claims. Edmond confidently shares the message of the death of Christ to save us from our sins and set us free from shame and guilt. This is followed with an invitation to service which is taken up. There is an evangelistic meeting most Mondays and a strong commitment to discipleship development through groups and preparation for baptism. We baptise up to 20 people per year and receive more



into membership through confirmation or by transfer from Methodist Churches across East Asia and Malaysia.

My own input is on the other Sunday as I preach and celebrate Holy Communion with Pastor Edmond. A good and thorough, biblically centred sermon is required of me. I have learned that repetition of a theme during a sermon is okay and culturally appropriate, having listened to the way testimonies are told within this community. It doesn't work to have long Bible passages on a Sunday, as we read them together, aloud. Short, pithy pieces of scripture work well, referring to further verses for context. I have learned not to use the same stories and illustrations I would use elsewhere, checking with my translator that the illustration will work. When the good news of Jesus' saving love is preached with conviction and depth, the people are still and quiet.

As the word finds its mark, there is no showiness. A quiet pondering and prayerful soul-searching takes place. The depth of faith is demonstrated in the amount of people - with busy and complicated lives - offering to take on roles of leadership and responsibility within the church. Wilson, a junior doctor is leading the international, English speaking service and training as a preacher. Livian is running a small business over at the coast, helping to establish a new congregation there and is training as a preacher. Our Circuit Steward, Kit is a nurse in a busy hospital department. All are giving service in response to the Word of Life. As we listen to Jesus and hear the Scriptures speak to us, we find that we are released into a new way of living. Kingdom priorities emerge and prayer becomes a way of life rather than a punctuation mark within it.

The Word speaks to every heart. Our youngest preacher is Steven, a second generation Christian who had to find his way to salvation in his own response to the Word. He has a specific burden to help the British-born Chinese to discover the truth of Jesus. He is working as our intern, speaking the love of God in Jesus to students at the University of East Anglia, the high schools and the Art College. He leads the student and youth ministry, with the wonderful gift of deep, personal faith coupled with fluency in three languages. His evangelism is gentle, allowing God's love to shine through as Steven speaks to them. Whether the Spirit stirs the mind or begins to work salvation in the depths of our being, I do not know. What is evident is that there is a desire for Salvation and a desperation among the people of Chinese heritage to find meaning and purpose in life. Steven's preaching is an important part of our mission. Even in the wider circuit, as he accompanies his mentor to preaching appointments, he is valued as he speaks the Word of God into the ears of our people for whom the gospel message has become ordinary.

I love how this piece of work is growing. It is ordinary, traditional church planting as we always knew it. What makes it fresh is the corporate trust in the Word of God and a firm belief in the God who moves mountains and who makes a way where there is no way. The culture that we cross is from World to Kingdom and we are workers in the same vineyard - our Master and Lord is King Jesus.

This church grew up in the care of the people of Sprowston Methodist, a church with good spiritual DNA and deep love for the Word of God. In the early days of the ministry among Chinese language

speaking people in Norwich and the surrounding areas, the Methodist people at Sprowston helped with English language, taught Sunday School and offered a place of welcome as the new church was established. I believe this was possible due to the shared love of Scripture and belief in the power of the Cross for the transformation of lives. As a community of faith, Sprowston Methodist had become discouraged and had lost its heart over the past decade. The memory of their heyday of charismatic renewal and big youth and children's work had become a whip with which they were beating themselves.

I have loved being their minister for the past 3 years. We have brought the Word into central focus, having a comprehensive programme for studies in groups and consolidated in Sunday pulpit ministry. Confidence is building. It seems that when we base our programme on the Word and come to the Cross with the deliberate intention of seeking transformation in Christ, Life is breathed once more into the bones of the church. A clarion call of 'Feed the people,' has announced the ministry I offer. Feed people good food - a hearty breakfast - and a good diet of scripture and watch the desire for mission and development ignite. Our prayer meeting is regularly attracting more than 20 people, and we are seeking God's heart through worship, the Word and listening for God to speak in prophetic ways. We are looking to the future with hope.

More than 30 years ago, the message hidden in the painted mural on the front wall of my home church was trying to be the focus of the people. Now, the mural has been re-plastered and painted over. The people who sat in front of it



*...when we base our programme on the Word and come to the Cross with the deliberate intention of seeking transformation in Christ, Life is breathed once more into the bones of the church.*



have learned that the message of Christ Crucified is one which is not to be twisted into incomprehensible words or made to fit the age, but to be taken out. The Word of Salvation is being taken out by the people of Bowthorpe Road in their evangelistic living. It is being taken out once more by the people of the Methodist Church in Sprowston. They will do it more and more as they have more to give.

I have learned that you can't expect people to give out what they do not have. The Word of God must be a rich vein running through our churches if indeed we are to proclaim an evangelistic message of Salvation to the ends of the earth.

*Catherine Hutton is currently Superintendent Minister of Norwich Circuit. She lives with her husband Gavin and sons Joel and Aidan. Other than ministry, she enjoys Marvel films, camping, Zumba and a sparkly manicure.*





# HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

*Nathan Veall*

**THE TREASURE I FOUND,  
THAT MY CHURCH HAD  
FORGOTTEN.**

**MY NAME IS NATHAN  
VEALL. I'M 21, I COME  
FROM CORNWALL, AND A  
HISTORICALLY METHODIST  
UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
BIBLE HAS TRANSFORMED  
MY LIFE.**

**REJECTION – THE COUNTERFEIT  
WHICH FAILED TO DELIVER**

The process of discovering what role the Bible had in my life, and indeed in the life of the Methodist Church was a somewhat slow journey for me. I became a Christian at the age of 14, but until my late-teens my experience of the Word of God in Methodism was very limited. Unfortunately, that was the case because there simply wasn't much desire for proper interaction with it, either in my personal life, or my Church experience. Even after becoming a Christian, I didn't really care much about the Bible. In my head, the Bible was just a book that talked a bit about God, had some nice stories, and carried some basic moral lessons. Overall, it was just about as relevant to my life as Aesop's Fables. Being brutally honest, for the most part save several exceptions, it felt like my Church had that view of the Bible too.

The Bible was an unusual story book, where the Sunday sermon might (at

times) not look very different to the kind of teaching you'd get in Sunday School. Someone might go up to the front and for 10 minutes or so share a 'story' from the Bible which had some moral lesson to learn from it. Here's a story of where Jesus was nice to people, so be nice to people. Here's a story where Jesus didn't judge someone, so don't judge people. Here's a story of where Jesus rode on a donkey, so don't care too much about nice cars. Now of course, we should be nice to people, not judge, and not care too much about possessions. But if the sum-total of the Bible's message is basically just 'be nice', then I found no real reason to read it or to go to Church. I had already been taught Aesop's Fables in Year 3. As far as I was concerned, I did not need to spend the rest of my life being reminded of morals that I agreed with through stories about dead people at an adult's Sunday School. I completely rejected this fairy-tale moralism with "Jesus language" thrown on top. I didn't need it since the whole world was telling me the 'be a nice person' message every day. Jesus, or at least the 'Jesus' I knew, had nothing distinctive to offer my life than any other club, religion or culture around me. The Bible was simply irrelevant, that's just where I was at. Thankfully, it's far from where I find myself now. I've been on a journey, and that journey first began with some questions.

I became a Christian after discovering the holiness of God, my sin and therefore condemnation before him, and yet his amazing salvation through Jesus. Yet,

at school, with my non-Christian friends I really struggled to answer some basic questions about God and Science, about Heaven and Hell, and about the Old Testament and the New. Where my atheist friends had questions about my faith, I'd be annoyed that I didn't have answers. I didn't know what the Bible said about a host of different issues. Each time, I would quickly google some basic rebuttals and then continue to be frustrated at my lack of knowledge about God. All the while, my Bible gathered dust and lay closed on my desk. I turned everywhere else, yet it never crossed my mind to seek answers in the Bible.

Now, if you've been a teenage Christian in the last 10 years or so, you'll know that in Christian youth culture everyone is always asking the question 'What is God's will for my life?'. At youth group or Soul Survivor we would spend ages thinking about the question. We'd hear stories 'from the front' of people who had received some special call to go and do an extraordinary 'new' thing. We'd all wait for this crazy spiritual experience where God would directly reveal to us the job we were going to do, the person we were going to go out with, the new thing he wanted to tell us. Yet, like many, I found myself without real answers. Most of what I thought 'God told me' about those things just turned out to be my desires. In frustration I'd spend ages at youth group waiting for God to speak something new to me about my life. All the while, my Bible gathered dust and lay closed on my desk.

To add to the struggle for knowledge, I found myself having a superficial love for God. During worship I would raise my hand in the air and give off passionate vibes. I'd sing about how much I loved God, how thankful I was to him for saving me, and how 'I'd never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross'. But behind closed doors I'd rarely pray for more than 5 minutes a day, I'd continue watching porn without an ounce of real repentance or change, and I'd never really talk about Jesus to my unsaved friends. I would wallow in short-term guilt, and think I'd never be able to 'get serious about God' until I was older. Holiness was not on the agenda. All the while, my Bible gathered dust and lay closed on my desk.

Hopefully, you're getting the theme here. Namely, my Bible gathered dust and lay closed on my desk. I never turned to the Bible because it wasn't cool, it wasn't relevant, and it couldn't help me in my struggles. Why would I turn to it? I didn't see my friends or Church turning to it as the primary place for answers, or the authority on how to live. Why would a book about morals help my real-life struggles? As I was waiting for God to tell me something new, the thought never crossed my mind that perhaps what I need to hear is what God's people have always needed to hear. That perhaps God's Word contained everything I need to know about his call on my life. God wasn't silent, I just refused to open the letter he'd already sent. I was trying to fight personal sin in my own strength, 'waiting for the Spirit to help me'. Yet, the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17), the weapon I needed to conquer my sin, lay sheathed in its holder. There were answers hidden in plain sight, and I had no idea.

**REALISATION – THE TREASURE  
THAT BROUGHT-FORTH LIFE.**

Gradually, I began to realise that whatever I needed, it wasn't going to be found in myself. So, I began to turn to the Bible. Through the help of friends, and Ministers who preached it, who taught it, who expounded it, and who applied it, I began to sit under the actual teaching of the Bible, through online sermons, and through personal study. Rather than a 'Radio 4 style' 10-minute 'thought for the day', I listened to people who stood up boldly and proclaimed a simple truth to me: that I needed to read and meditate on

the teaching of the Bible. As I began to do so, by the power of the Spirit, everything changed for me.

I began to read what Wesley and others said about the Bible, that it was 'a lantern unto a Christian's feet, and a light in all his paths' (John Wesley, 'The witness of our own spirit'). That its teaching was the highest authority for the Christian, and rather than take it lightly, I should submit to it. That in doing so, real freedom would be found. Though I'd heard these things, like many my age I'd never bothered to pick it up when no one was around. So, I picked it up, and began to study it. As I listened to online sermons, I began to find answers that I never thought existed. I was confronted in my sin in a way that I had always needed. I began to feel love for God and direction in life that I'd never had before. I began to feel the weight and sorrow of my sin, which led to real repentance. I began to grasp something of the greatness and majesty of God. A year-or-two on I was free from addiction to porn, I had answers to most of the questions I had ever asked, and I had a genuine assurance that Jesus had 'taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death'. I actually understood the cross, and was born again. I was thirsty and found living water. I was starving, and found manna for the soul.

**REJUVENATION – THE METHOD TO  
METHODISM.**

I chose to believe that what Jesus, history, and indeed Wesley said about Scripture was true. That the Apostles bear Jesus' authority (John 14:26, Matthew 10:40, Luke 10:16, 1 John 4:6) and that the Old Testament is the Word of God too (Matthew 5:17-20, Mark 7:13, Matthew 22:31, John 10:35). Like Methodists historically have done, instead of just going-along with what my culture likes, I chose to believe that by sitting under what Jesus and his Apostles taught, that I would find true freedom. It wasn't easy, and it took perseverance, but through the Bible, by his Spirit, the Lord changed a teenager's life. Now, I'm utterly convinced that the best thing any Christian can do, every teenager, is to study the Bible daily.

Who knew, that this view of the authority and goodness of Scripture was a very Methodist view of the Bible? I didn't! The Bible being front and centre in the life of a Christian and the life of the Church,

is the method that method-ism forgot. I wonder if you've ever thought why many different Church buildings historically have the altar front-and-centre, but the pulpit to the side? Mainly because the Eucharist was central to their worship and Church-life. Yet in Methodist Churches, the pulpit is normally the central point in the sanctuary, clear for all to see. This was because the Ministry of The Word was central to Methodist worship and Church-life. Wesley believed that the Bible is the primary way God speaks to his people; that it gives answers to the searching, shows us Christ, and brings us to him in our hour of need. Wesley never saw the 'Wesleyan quadrilateral' as 4 equal pillars where reason, tradition or experience could lead us to contradict what Jesus and the Apostles taught. Rather, the 3 lesser pillars were always to support, uphold and help us understand the central pillar, the pillar of Scripture.

Many of the issues I and my Church faced ultimately stemmed from not taking the Bible seriously. We need a rejuvenation of biblical preaching, and personal study. The Bible is far more than a historical document. It's the living, breathing Word of God. In it is found the hope of the gospel, light in a dark world, hope for the hopeless, and God himself. That's not about advocating a literalist view, we leave plenty of room for different genres of literature etc. Historical and textual criticism only confirm this reality. (<http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/>). Taking God at his word is not about literalism, it's about who is King. Christ, or culture? This journey, which has changed my life, leaves me to conclude with nothing other than the words of Wesley himself - "O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it! Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri ('a man of one book'). (John Wesley, Preface to standard 'Sermons')

*Nathan Veall is the former President of Warwick University Christian Union, and a member of the CARE Leadership Programme. He has a passion for the Gospel, expository preaching, and engaging with culture. He has recently moved to London, and works in the House of Commons. Visit [www.whotway.com](http://www.whotway.com) to find out latest youth videos hosted by Nathan, Bekky Brown and Ben Juliano.*

# THE THREEFOLD WORD OF GOD

*Peter Ensor*

## **PETER ENSOR UNPACKS SOME USES OF THE PHRASE 'THE WORD OF GOD' IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

I remember a visit John Stott made many years ago to the Theological College at which I was teaching in Kenya. In his address to the student community he said that he would begin by making a scientific experiment. This immediately aroused the students' interest, of course, because they were expecting a sermon rather than a scientific experiment, but then Stott went on to explain what he was going to do. He was going to ask everyone to remain silent for a minute while he was thinking about something, and then, when the minute ended, he would ask them to tell him what he had been thinking. So we had the minute's silence, but when he asked the students to tell him what he had been thinking during that minute, unsurprisingly they were not able to do so.

The whole point of the scientific experiment was to show that we cannot know what another person is thinking unless they tell us. Stott then applied that point to God: we cannot know what God is thinking unless he chooses to tell us and, by extension, we cannot know God himself as a person unless he chooses to reveal himself to us. The point was well made.

One of the characteristics of our faith as evangelical Christians is that we believe that God has in fact revealed himself. He has made himself known to his human

creation. He has spoken to us by means of his 'words' and in the process has told us what he thinks about a whole range of matters. Moreover we believe that he has done so, and is continuing to do so, in at least three main ways:

### **GOD SPEAKS THROUGH JESUS**

John's Gospel begins with the words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God' (1:1). What or who was this 'Word'? The answer is clear from the context, where we read that 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father ... who has made him known' (John 1.14, 18). The 'Word' is the self-revelation of God which was embodied in Jesus. John is telling us that it is by considering Jesus, his life, teaching, and example, that we may gain an understanding of what God is like. Jesus is God's incarnate 'Word'.

This understanding of Jesus is echoed throughout the New Testament as a whole. When Philip says 'Show us the Father' in John 14:8, Jesus replies by saying 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). To the Jews in John 7:16 he says 'my teaching is not mine but his who sent me'. Paul says that Jesus 'is the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:16), and that God has 'shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6), while the writer to the Hebrews writes that Jesus 'reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature' (Hebrews 1.3). This consistent

understanding of the person of Jesus held by the early Christians is well expressed in the modern description of Jesus as 'the human face of God'.

In evangelical belief, therefore, someone who wants to know God should look first at Jesus, whose divine claims were supremely vindicated by his resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). But how can we 'look at' one who left this earthly scene almost 2000 years ago? The answer to this question brings us to the second form of God's self-revelation: Scripture.

### **GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE**

Evangelical Christians believe that God has spoken not only through Jesus, but also through Scripture, which bears a reliable witness to him as well as to the religious world of the Old Testament which gives meaning to his recorded ministry. Scripture is God's written 'word'.

In relation to the Old Testament, belief in its status as God's written 'word' rests primarily in the fact that both Jesus and the early Christians accepted it as such (see, for example, Mark 12:24, 28-31, 36, 14:27, 49, Luke 22:37, 24:27, John 5:46, Acts 1:16, 4:25, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 3:7-11, 2 Peter 1:20-21). Moreover, references to God's 'word' in Psalm 119 and Mark 7:13 provide examples of the word 'word' being used of God's written revelation in the Old Testament, as distinct from other forms of revelation.

The New Testament's status as God's written word obviously cannot be

supported in the same way since the New Testament canon as we have it today was not formed until well after the apostolic period and none of its writers were aware of the fact that what they or others were writing would become part of what we now call the New Testament. Nevertheless, the early church's decision to put the New Testament alongside the Old Testament as the second half of the canon of Scripture may be justified in the light of the following five considerations:

**(i)** If God inspired the Old Testament, as Jesus clearly believed he did, and if the Old Testament is a record of God's unfolding plan of salvation in the period prior to Jesus' coming, as Jesus again clearly believed to be the case, then it is antecedently likely that God would have similarly inspired a body of literature which would bear witness to the continuation and climax of his plan of salvation in Jesus himself.

**(ii)** Jesus himself taught and trained his disciples carefully for three years, and commissioned them to preach his message to others. They were called to be his personal agents, charged with authority to share the good news with others. 'He who hears you hears me,' he said, 'and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me' (Luke 10:16). According to the witness of all the Gospels, Jesus, after his resurrection, also sent his disciples into the whole world for the same purpose (Matthew 28:19ff, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8).

**(iii)** When the apostles spoke in Jesus' name, they spoke with authority, as the book of Acts abundantly testifies (Acts 2:14-36, 3:12-26, 4:8-13, 31, 33, 5:29-32, 9:20-22, 28, 10:34-43, 13:16-47, 14:15-17, 17:22-31), and when they (or their associates) wrote, they wrote with confidence that what they were writing was true and/or God-given (cf. Luke 1:1-4, John 21:24, 1 Corinthians 2:13-16, 14:37ff, 2 Corinthians 13:3, Galatians 1:9, 12, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 4:2, Revelation 1:3, 2:1-3.22, 22:18ff).

**(iv)** The early church acknowledged the writings of the New Testament as bearing apostolic authority, whether written by an apostle or an associate of an apostle. Even within the New Testament itself there is evidence that Matthew's Gospel and Paul's writings were already being considered as 'Scripture' on the same level as the Old Testament (compare 1 Timothy 5.18 with Matthew 10.10, and see 2 Peter 3.16), and some writings were clearly intended to be

read in the context of Christian worship (Colossians 4.16, Revelation 1.3). By the end of the 4th century, the Early Church was virtually unanimous concerning which books should be included in the New Testament, and its decision has since stood the test of time.

**(v)** Finally, theologians appeal to the experience of what is called the 'internal witness of the Holy Spirit' in the hearts of believers. The Bible has a way of speaking to people like no other book. It possesses a supernatural quality, which is capable of convicting people of their sins, and leading them to put their trust in Jesus as Saviour. Countless numbers of people have been converted simply through reading the Bible, and countless others, have found God speaking to them through the Bible to guide, encourage, and strengthen them in their daily walk with him.

Taken cumulatively these arguments present a good case for affirming the traditional view that the canon of Scripture as a whole is God's inspired and authoritative 'word'. This is, of course, a position of faith, but it is also a reasonable one to adopt in the light of the above considerations, and it is the position which the universal Church has held for most of its history.

There are many texts in the New Testament which refer to Christian preaching as 'the word of God' or 'the word of the Lord' (e.g. Acts 4:31, 6:2, 8:25, 11:1, 13:5, 7, 44, 46, 49, 15:35f, 16:32, 18:11, 19:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Hebrews 4:12, 13.7). This brings us to a third way in which God reveals himself. Preaching is God's spoken 'word', or, to put it more fully in the words of Bernard Manning, it is 'the manifestation of the incarnate word from the written word through the spoken word'.

### **GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CHRISTIAN PREACHING**

We may compare this mode of revelation with the phenomenon of prophecy, which is prominent in both testaments, whereby chosen individuals are given a special ability to communicate God's message to his people under the inspiration of his Spirit. 'Preaching the Word of God' probably refers primarily to prepared messages with a strong didactic element, whereas 'Prophesying' probably refers primarily to utterances of encouragement or warning delivered to a specific audience under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, but both refer to God-given communication of one kind or another.

Whatever its mode, content, or audience, it needs to be stressed that any purported message from God delivered by a believer should not be received as such without due scrutiny. Thus Luke implicitly commends the Bereans for 'examining the Scriptures' to see whether what Paul was saying (presumably about the Old Testament) was true (Acts 17:11). Paul says that any 'prophecies' uttered in a church meeting should be 'weighed', i.e. evaluated (1 Corinthians 14:29) by those present, and exhorts Timothy to guard the gospel which had been entrusted to him (1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:13f), as though it was possible for him to deviate from it. More generally, he tells the Thessalonians to 'test everything' and 'hold fast to what is good' (1 Thessalonians 5.21). The New Testament recognizes the presence of false teachers in the Church who pervert the true gospel, which is why Jude urges his readers to 'contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' (i.e. to God's people, Jude 4). This warning is just as relevant now as it was in the 1st century.

The message is clear: our preaching today is a channel of divine communication only insofar as it coheres with the message of the Bible, and in particular the teaching of Jesus and his apostles, which for us today is accessed most reliably in the writings of the New Testament. Anything which contradicts these sources should be guarded against if we are to remain faithful to God's self-revelation.

In summary, we are called to know God primarily by attending to his self-revelation, in Jesus, Scripture, and the faithful preaching of the gospel, and having thus come to know him, we are called to make him known to others.

*Revd Dr Peter Ensor is a supernumerary minister in the Salisbury Circuit. Formerly he was a tutor at Cliff College and a Senior Lecturer at Kenya Methodist University.*



# SPREADING THE 'WORD' IN ROTHERHAM, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Joanne Siddall

## **SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER JOANNE A. SIDDALL TAKES THE PAST INTO THE PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE IN THE ROTHERHAM AND DEARNE VALLEY CIRCUIT, SHEFFIELD DISTRICT.**

I grew up in Sheffield. My Nanan was a Catholic and her little council flat was full of crucifixes with a large 'Blessed Mary' and a 70's framed photo of the Pope, pride of place. The Blessed Mary would watch over us children, as cousins, aunts and uncles met weekly for the 'family doo' - we children thrived on cheering the wrestlers on TV (Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks of course), the footy results (which were teletext t...y.p....e.....d ..... very slowly across the bottom of the screen) and The Pink Panther show. We would eat Peck Sandwiches on a Hovis white with red sauce and generally get up to mischief.

One of my earliest memories of these times was wondering why Jesus looked so sad on all those crosses. And why that one event was considered so good when it looked so bad.

When my Nanan died in 1983 (when I was 8), all the cousins got to choose something of hers to keep. I picked a small white bible crammed full of funeral cards, a crucifix showing Jesus very upset, and some rosary beads. I kept these 'religiously' under my pillow to warn off the Vampires and to protect me from scary monsters. Isn't it amazing how fantasy and fear can cloud the purpose of the scriptures? I would read that little white Bible (KJV), and although I didn't understand what I was reading at that time, something was stirred in my spirit. I knew the words were important, and I needed to keep them close to my mind and my heart (hence under the pillow)!

My journey from Catholicism into Methodism is far too long, and possibly far too boring to share here. In any case, it most certainly would take me on a tangent away from the theme. That being said, my early encounter with the Word and that 'bad' but strangely 'good' act of Jesus on the

cross are essential to my story of faith. I ended up, where I ended up - a presbyter - not too far from my birthplace, now stationed in Rotherham. A town with a bad reputation, but a town in recovery. What I sensed as a child, I know with absolute assurance as an adult - the Word of God must be kept close to heart and mind - in fact more than that - IN heart and mind.

The Bible and its centrality throughout Methodist history is to be celebrated. Our holy scriptures need to be seen, shared and heard, not silenced, erased or hidden.

The typed word on a white page reads us as we read the rich 'God breathed' poetry, history, letters, story. The story of our salvation matters. Our scriptures matter. They do not need modernising, re-writing, sound biting or twisting. The scriptures speak for with the Spirit. The scriptures read us as we read them. Sometimes it isn't comfortable or easy. It is not meant to be.

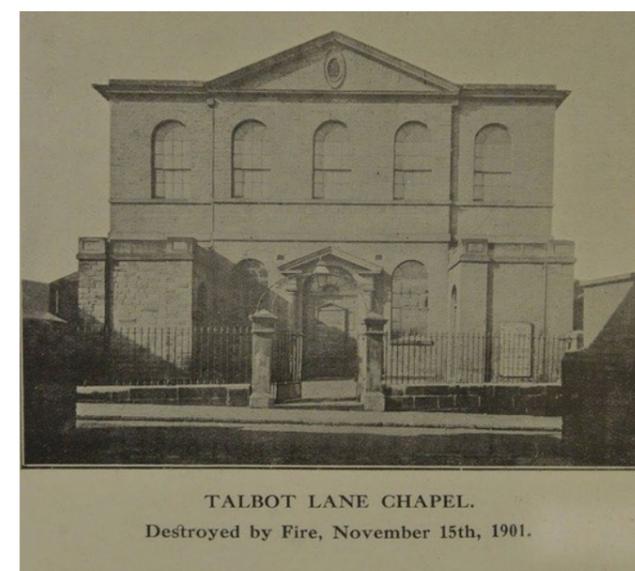
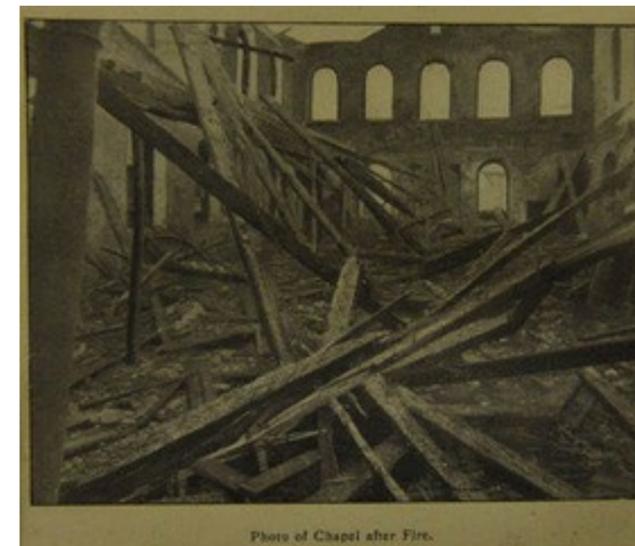
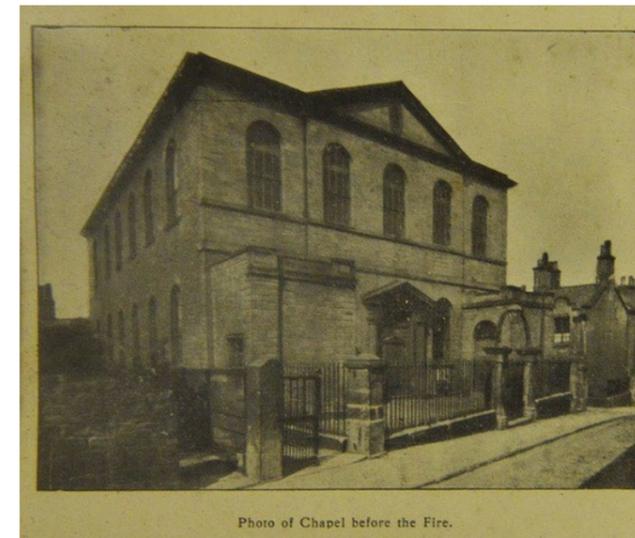
As we read, ponder, absorb and dance with scripture, we meet the glorious Father. Jesus our Rescuer reaches out to us and the Spirit is stirring us. How blessed we are to have that wonderful book!

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said: 'Visit many good books, but live in the Bible'.

So how do we do this in Rotherham. Let's reach back into history - the history of 1 place and 1 book?

The town centre church, a huge 850 seater Grade 2 listed building has closed. No longer fit for purpose, it is sold subject to contract, the 3rd church on the site, with Methodist worship on that town centre site since 1761. It was too big, and (now) in the wrong place, as much of the town centre has 'moved'.

The first church was an octagonal chapel. By the early 19th century the octagonal building was 'no longer fit for purpose' -



it was too small!! So a huge preaching house was built. Disaster struck in 1901 when the organ-tuner dropped his candle and the place burnt down. A third church, the neo-gothic style 3rd building was completed in 1903.

The first - too small.

The second- burnt down.

The third - too big.

The reason I tell you this is because of what survived.

In the wreckage and destruction, one item was 'recovered'. And it is the same item that can take us all to a place of recovery.

The Word of God.

The Word in Rotherham.

The only item that did not perish was the Bible. More than a metaphor - a parable. Maybe something sacramental, even. An outward sign of a deep, deep reality. The only item salvaged. We need to salvage the Word in every Church and in every story.

I am reminded of Matthew 24:35, 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away'.

Or perhaps Psalm 119:89, 'Your word, O LORD, is everlasting; it is firmly fixed in the heavens'.

So in our circuit, this is our legacy. Our story matters. Where we have come from, where we are now and where we need to be. We hold the great story of our salvation, that was not consumed in the fire. It was not consumed in the destruction. It survived, was salvaged, rescued, celebrated and preserved.

We in Rotherham pledge to do the same.

Salvage. Rescue. Celebrate. Preserve.

Where?

In our new church, based in Rotherham Market. Located in an old nightclub which was once called Adam and Eve's. We take the Bible, into the Market Place. Market place ministry. We might not be in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), but Rotherham is a close second.

We in Rotherham reflect and read and are ready.

Ready for the journey. Ready for the future because of the past. Ready for the rescue.

I still have the white Bible and the rosary and the crucifix. Why? Because where we have come from matters.

I no longer eat Peck sandwiches or watch the wrestling.

*Joanne Siddall is in her 7th year in Rotherham. Previously she served in Huddersfield and before that Sheffield. She is a former Police Officer. Married to Eddie, a Lay Pastor in the circuit, they have three daughters, Elizabeth (19), Abigail (16) and Miriam (9). Jo thinks Eddie deserves a medal with a house full of ladies!*

# S A A KINGDOM CONFIDENCE

*Bart Woodhouse*

Postmodernism is a word best avoided. The history of the 'cultural concept' is complex and is unfortunately usually reduced to a series of clumsy slogans within most discussions. This is a symptom of the fact that there are no convenient formulations which adequately take into account the vast philosophical, economic, cultural, moral, aesthetic and political dynamics at play under the unhelpful banner of 'postmodernism'. However, whilst still grossly inadequate in isolation, Fredrick Jameson's subtitle to his book *Postmodernism* gives us a helpful start point, framing Postmodernism as the 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. The maturing historic effect of capitalism has, within a complex weave of ideological ideas and technological development, gradually commodified every aspect of cultural life. This process undermines the value and expediency of our foundational cultural and historic narratives, of which 'Christianity' is one, by removing any intrinsic value to these 'big stories' and instead valuing the moment of selective and subjective consumption of each narrative. We all become increasingly idiosyncratic consumers of culture and its interplay of narratives to the point that nothing is true in itself, but rather retains limited value in its openness to the demands and freedoms of the market. We then arrive at some of the slogans of our postmodern age, 'tell me your truth and I'll tell you mine', where truth and ideas are relative and loosely 'owned' in as much as they appeal to the demands of the individual who has increasingly

become a compliant consumer of both 'everything' and 'nothing'.

In the light of all this, there is a recognition that postmodernism is neither a linear process nor a destination, but rather an attempt at describing a cultural, philosophical, moral and aesthetic explosion. It is a rather maddeningly complex and rapid movement of ideas that instantaneously removed both the foundations and the ceiling of former structures, resulting in a new borderless landscape where the consumer is truly free, to fall into the abyss, rise to new heights, or transgress formerly forbidden boundaries. However, it must be noted that Postmodernism is also a term that is increasingly regarded as describing a philosophical 'dead end' and its use within both the academic world and the media has diminished considerably over the past ten years. Having said that, the symptoms of 'postmodernism' persist and, in such areas as gender politics, sexuality, and language it is conceptually as promiscuous as ever.

It is worthy of note, that the rise of the 'alt-right' within many western nations and the exponential growth of YouTube phenomena such as Jordan Peterson and Ben Shapiro suggest an anxiety or longing within certain elements of our western culture that rejects much of the postmodern 'politic'. I wonder whether this is evidence of an increasing desire to find the comforting 'hand rails' of meaning, identity and purpose, or in other words to affirm

conceptual borders collectively. One can see this being played out literally within the bewildering landscape of the Brexit vote and some of its motivating factors, to define Britain more clearly as an independent nation, to affirm the border. Much of the discourse of these movements and personalities is not something I necessarily endorse, but I am interested in the fact that they appear to be gaining so much traction in a supposedly 'post-truth' age.

Jordan Peterson's book *12 Rules for Life - An Antidote to Chaos* has sold millions of copies and topped the best seller list in the USA for several months. His lectures and YouTube videos have also attracted many millions of views and are particularly appealing to young men. Peterson offers nothing more than traditional 'maps of meaning', in a loose sense restoring old narratives as a means of understanding what it means to be human and develop a more satisfying and honest understanding of suffering and death. I mention this as I feel it is important for us to recognise the possibility that postmodernism has served to highlight an innate longing for meaning within the human condition, and missionally speaking, the same 'God shaped hole' questions begin to rise to the surface once again. Equally, the recent publication of *'The Madness of Crowds'* by Douglas Murray highlights the increasingly insidious nature of the cultural phenomena growing out of the postmodern soil, which is flowing as an overly extended, ideologically

motivated identity politics and social justice. His work is controversial, and again I don't necessarily endorse all his sentiments, but his popularity and the way in which his concerns have resonated with a diverse audience, raise some interesting questions. Without the space to explore them properly, these questions include: How do we secure justice with no foundational narrative? Why does identifying as being oppressed create a universal and unquestionable seat of authority? What kind of world does this particular ideology seek to create? It seems to me that elements of our culture are playing an old game in a new situation, reaching into the playful and frightening abyss of postmodernism to attempt to pull out the aging white rabbit of a utopian future - a trick attempted many times, and often with terrifying consequences. It is into the furore of this 'madness' that we need to keep a confident hold of the 'old, old story', it gives a foundation to justice, reveals the humble authority of Jesus, and the Kingdom as our only authentic destination. Through our love, humility and confidence in Jesus we have the antidote to the madness, but we must not neglect to pray and confidently speak his truth.

I am also aware, after 10 years of church planting, that the church has possibly over-emphasised the need to be culturally relevant and has unwittingly fallen into the error that Leslie Newbiggin highlighted in *Foolishness to the Greeks*, that the missionary always risks either syncretism or irrelevance in seeking to communicate the gospel message effectively, and I question whether we have drifted into syncretism. Of course, there is the continual missional need to affirm and mine the divine voice 'preveniently' present in culture, but one must achieve this without affirming every neoliberal and politically expedient convention. As the academic Terry Eagleton, at the conclusion of his insightful exploration of 'Culture' warns, 'If those who speak of culture cannot do so without inflating the concept, it is perhaps better they remain silent' and I believe we have been inflating the concept and bowing the knee too often. In short, I am suggesting that we should avoid the suffocating and diluting effect of over-emphasising the centrality of cultural literacy and palatability, but equally without neglecting the humility of walking the landscape, learning the language of our neighbours, communities

and wider society, and obediently listening to the Holy Spirit.

When we consider Jesus, he seems reluctant to affirm many of the dominant cultural themes and norms, both politically and religiously. He rather announces a new culture, that of the Kingdom, that welcomes the other, the lost, the broken and the outcast; it turns the other cheek and loves its enemies. This welcome transformation is made by means of the sacrificial love of the King, who gave his life as a means of rescue to all who would receive it. This moment of grace is a gift realised by personal invitation, and this invitation is by its very nature a moment of surrender and welcome to the transforming power of the King. The Kingdom message of Jesus transforms rather than affirms the status quo, the sick are made well, the lost are found, the tax collector gives away his wealth, the dead are raised to life. Without a surrendered welcome the Kingdom message becomes either corrosive or inert, as with the Pharisees or the rich young ruler. The Kingdom message has an eternal authority that demands the surrender and transformation of the culture it inhabits, not the other way around.

We need to recover our confidence in the transformative power of the Gospel, that it gives meaning and purpose in a world that is becoming sickly with the opiate of relativism and meaninglessness, that it gives hope in a world of pain and division, and gives freedom from shame and a relational connection with a divine parent who knows us and came looking for us in Jesus. He took our death and sin and gave us his righteousness and life, a timeless truth that needs sharing now more than ever.

Dr Bart Woodhouse is a Pioneer Minister planting a church in Ebbsfleet



# THE SELFIE SYNDROME: THE POSTMODERN DOWNGRADE OF THEOLOGY

Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman

## DANIEL PRATT MORRIS-CHAPMAN PICTURES THE ELUSIVE DANGERS OF POSTMODERNISM AS A SELFIE GONE TOO FAR!

Last year I had the opportunity to visit Venice. While it's a beautiful city, it is really overcrowded. I could hardly walk anywhere without stumbling into someone's selfie (one man nearly fell off a boat taking one). All this got me thinking - why are we so obsessed with taking selfies?



I don't suppose it is an exaggeration to say that we live in a narcissistic age. Our postmodern culture encourages us to believe that we are the centre and measure of everything. Truth consists in meeting human standards and since those standards differ in different times and places, truth and morality become nothing more than a cultural projection. Put simply, life, the universe and everything are nothing more than a great big selfie framed according to our opinions and preferences.

Before going any further I should confess that I also take a lot of selfies (I was raised postmodern). However, in Venice, I couldn't send them to my friends because my phone is very old and the signal was terrible. Postmodernism is a bit like

this. According to this (anti-realist) way of thinking, human knowledge is disconnected from the real world. Thus, just as my phone disengaged from the mobile network, these thinkers have argued that our beliefs about reality have no connection with the way things actually are (imagine that all these philosophers have failed to pay their mobile phone bills and that we have all been [ontologically] cut off).

Postmodern theology is like a mobile phone in 'Flight-mode' (Stobart 2016). It is switched on but it does not want to interfere with reality. Writers like Dewi Phillips, Stanley Hauerwas and George Lindbeck, who have promoted this malnourished (postmodern) form of religion, have suggested that Christian doctrine does not need to correspond to the way God really is. This has huge implications for the Church's central teaching on the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and the interpretation of the scriptures generally.

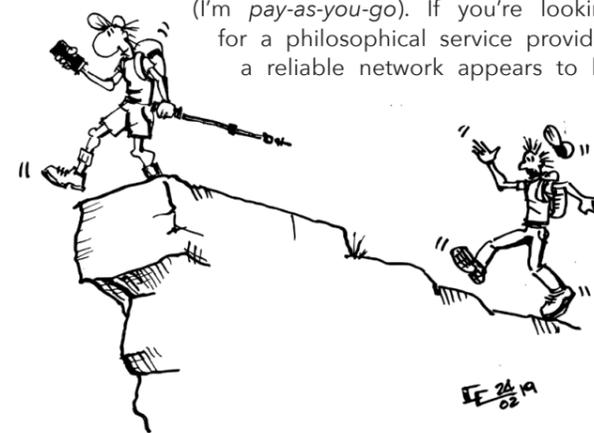
On this way of thinking, the moral teaching of the Bible becomes little more than an outdated cultural projection with no real bearing upon how we should live today. If he were alive, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) - who criticised those who made light of the scriptures - would view this postmodern approach as a 'downgrade' from the way the Bible has been primarily regarded. The last thing we need now is a downgrade. What we need is to upgrade to a new (philosophical) phone contract so that we can dump all this outdated postmodern junk.

The Church in every age needs an upgrade - one with better network coverage. Sadly, many Christian theologians (sociologists and philosophers) behave as though postmodernism is the only philosophical service provider available. This is quite simply untrue - there are a number of networks available if they would only enter a good phone (I mean book) shop.

In *Analytic Theology* (2009), Oliver Crisp cautions against postmodern (epistemic) understandings of truth (p.47) and insists that, over the centuries, when theologians have spoken and written about God they have generally understood themselves to be saying what God is really like. Accordingly,

they have followed what has been called a (realist) correspondence theory of truth - believing that a statement is true if it describes reality.

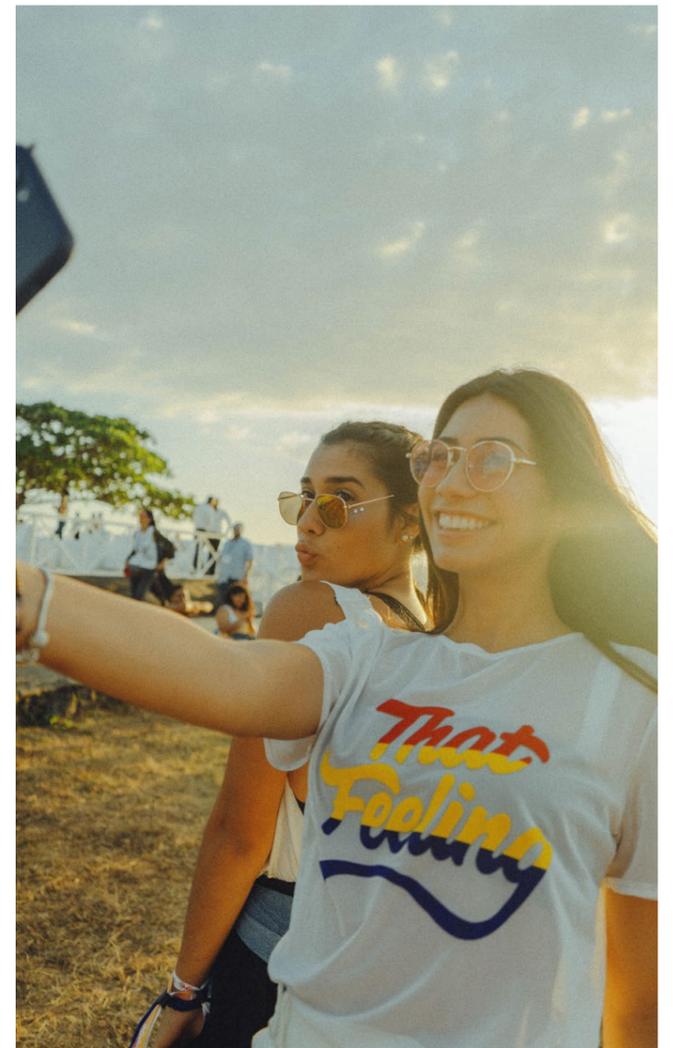
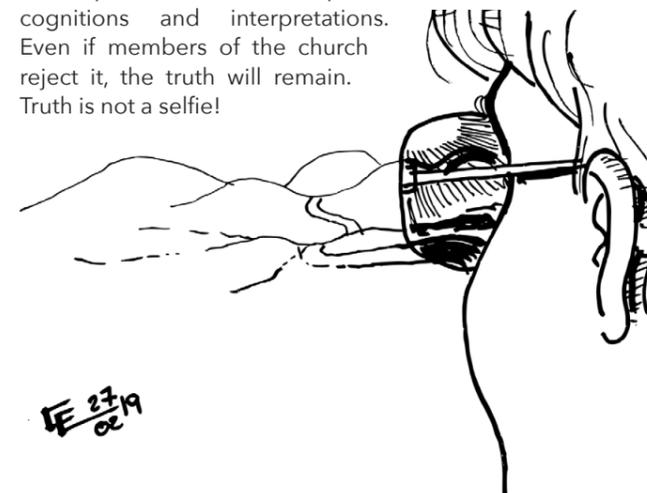
Of course this (realist) understanding of truth has undergone a number of upgrades. Earlier models mistakenly thought that the structure of language mirrored reality (ontologically). Today no one should sign up to this epistemological contract (I'm *pay-as-you-go*). If you're looking for a philosophical service provider, a reliable network appears to be



that of 'critical realism.' If we sign up to this critical realist network provider (epistemology of theology) we can say that a statement is true or false independently of our human opinions or preferences (Vermurlen 2013).

In 'Taking the Curse off Language Games' (1995) the late William Alston explained that 'even if our ways of determining what is true differ from one [culture] to another' the belief that 'God made the heavens and the earth' will only be true if in fact 'God did make the heavens and the earth' (p.23). Thus, regardless of our culture and language, our theological statements will be true if they correspond to God and false if they do not.

If all this is so, then it has implications for the Church. First: even if the Church makes a theological decision, that decision can be wrong - even if we follow all due process. The truth or falsity of the matter is not determined by our standards or procedures since God exists independently of them. Second: it is misleading to presuppose debates about things that matter with the idea that, 'whatever we decide,' it 'doesn't really matter as long as everybody remains friends.' Truth does matter. It is not merely a cultural projection or personal preference. Truth is independent of human opinions, cognitions and interpretations. Even if members of the church reject it, the truth will remain. Truth is not a selfie!



## HELPFUL FURTHER READING

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Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman serves a congregation in Italy which is blessed by migrants from Africa and elsewhere.  
Illustration: Cesare Casiraghi

# DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL FRUIT

Kevin Jones

## PAUL GIVES 2 KEY ACTIONS IN DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL FRUIT: 1: PUTTING OFF. 2: PUTTING ON.

### 1: PUTTING OFF

The Christian will always be pulled in two directions, we are in essence a living Spirit in a dead body. 'If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness' (Romans 8:10). Colossians says, 'you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God' (3:3). 'Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry' (3:5).

The question is where is your mind set; on Christ or in this world? 'Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth' says Paul. (1-2). Are we preoccupied with worry- Plans - Books - TV - the news? We must set our minds on things above and draw strength from God's presence.

Then, we are told to put off our old attitudes; God does not do it for us, we must 'put off all these' (3:8). This is not about will power; it is about which kingdom we draw strength from. A profound change takes place when someone comes to faith in Christ.

**We change our spiritual condition.** We move from death to life 'you were dead in your sins but God made you alive with Christ' (2:13).

**We change our kingdom;** 'He has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves' (1:12-13).

**We change our standing.** We were enemies, now we are reconciled. 'Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you.' (1:21-22).

**God comes to live within us.** 'For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ' (2:9-10).

Because we are changed people, there are things we are to put off.

Paul separates these into two categories, sins of the heart 'sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry' (3:5). These inward sins are not seen openly but God sees, and the attitude of our heart will eventually show. Through confession and repentance, we need to put off these inward temptations.

The second category is our words. People cannot see our hearts but they can hear our words. 'You yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language..... Do not lie to one another' (3:8-9 NKJV). We probably sin in our words more than any other area. Do you suffer from foot in mouth disease? It comes from the old self not from Christ; there is no excuse for addressing a brother or sister in Christ with 'anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language or lies.' James puts it clearly 'The tongue - is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell' (James 3:6). Our words betray our hearts, better to say nothing than wound a brother or sister in Christ. We are to put these things off like old worn-out clothes.

### 2: WHAT ARE WE TO PUT ON?

'Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, in the image of its Creator' (3:10). The process is not finished, when God took us on, he took on a restoration project. He is restoring the lost Image of God (Gen 1:26-27). This comes through his Spirit reigning within.

The test is how we treat each other. 'As God's chosen people, -- clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you' (3:12-13).

We need an attitude adjustment, we are to put on a new attitude like new clothes, we have to clothe ourselves, God will not do it. This attitude is the attitude of Christ, and he expects it to live in us. If we do not feel like putting on 'compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' we must obey by faith and our feelings will soon follow on.

Feelings follow decisions. If you decide to act in a loving way, you will begin to love, if you act in a forgiving way, you will begin to forgive. Do not let your fleshly feelings dominate your spiritual life. 'Set your mind on things above' (3:2).

Grievances test character. I have met people whose grievances consume them. I remember J--n telling me, after her mother's funeral, that she suspected her mother kept her money in the brass railing above the fireplace, when she arrived at the house, her sister had already removed the railing, and said, 'It was empty.' From that day forward, there was no trust between these two sisters. It became a persistent unforgiven grievance.

'And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity' (3:14). Love is described here as a belt making the clothes fit. If our doctrine does not lead us to love, we have our doctrine wrong. For 'love will cover a multitude of sins' (1 Peter 4:8). Good doctrine leads to loving actions.

One word of caution, love is not an excuse for sin. There is a new 'inclusive' gospel being preached in our churches, which often ignores repentance and the new birth. We are not saved by God's love, we are saved by the blood of Christ. Paul calls the Colossians to love one another, but to stand firmly against any gospel that does not insist on the fruit of holiness. Repentance and faith are still the doorway to the kingdom. (Mark 1:15.) A life that turns from sin is the sign that the Spirit of Christ is at work within. The gospel invites all, but on Judgement Day, only the repentant will be included. The gospel of inclusiveness is a popular, but counterfeit gospel. It is one step from universalism, the false belief that all will finally be saved.

### 3: THREE GUIDING LIGHTS

In our progress to holiness God grants us three guides for the way.

**i) The peace of Christ:** 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts' (3:15). The word for rule is 'referee' or 'umpire'.

The Holy Spirit will remove our peace when we sin. The moment we lose our sense of peace, the Holy Spirit is calling us back to confession and repentance, this is a continual process. God brings to mind the thing that caused his peace to leave and until we confess it, we will not find his peace restored. When the referee blows the whistle, we have broken the rules and the game stops. When we lose our peace, we must stop and put right the offence before continuing to walk with Christ. The presence of peace or absence of peace is our guide, 'the peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts' (3:15).

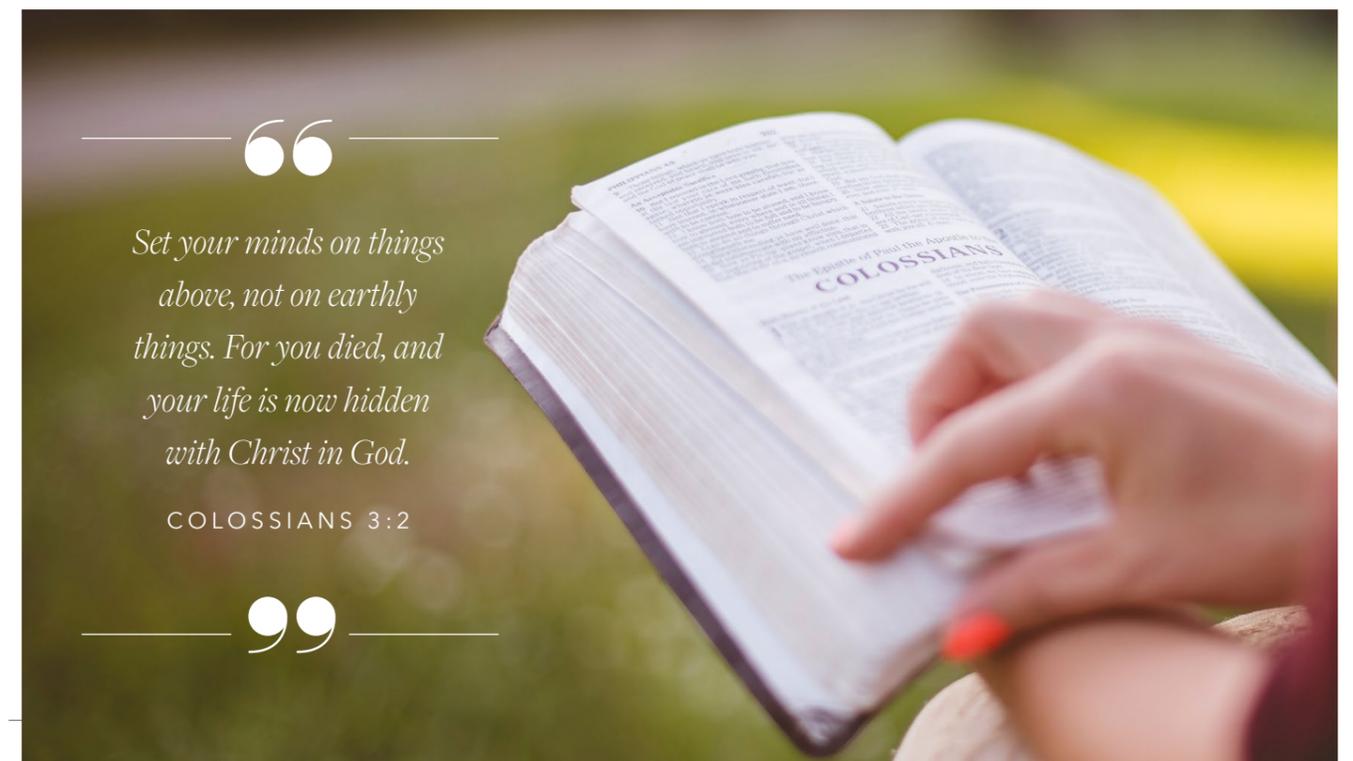
**ii) The guidance of the word:** 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly' (3:16). God's word speaks into our situation; the Bible makes a distinction between the 'Logos' the eternal word and the 'Rhema', a specific or 'now' word. The preached and the prophetic word can speak directly to our situation so that the eternal word becomes the 'now' word for us. Most importantly, God will never inspire us to do something that his written Word specifically condemns. The word and the Spirit are one, in their guidance, and all guidance leads to holiness. Rationalising our sinful behaviour will not bring back the peace of God. The rule is simple in matters of morality, the Word is inspired and reason is fallible, as Doctor Martyn

Luther discovered; reason must be captive to the word of God. This is an unchanging principle of guidance.

**iii) The heart fixed on praise:** Praise has a strong link with thankfulness. 'Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God' (3:16). Praise focuses our spirit on God and changes our attitude. There has been a rediscovery of praise over the last 30 years. People have come to see praise and worship as a means of entry into God's presence (Psalm 100:4). Those who enter through the gates of praise find praise is more than singing, it is entering whole heartedly into the joy of the Lord through the expression of a song. This is an instruction to be obeyed, rather than a suggestion to be considered. 'Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God' (3:16).

If we are to be fruitful we must learn to put off the old self, with its attitudes and words that wound, fix our minds on Christ and put on the new self, with a changed attitude. We must listen to the guiding peace of the Holy Spirit and let the Word of Christ dwell richly in us as our hearts are thrilled with praise.

*Revd Kevin D Jones is a former Superintendent Minister of the Gornal and Sedgley Circuit*



“

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

COLOSSIANS 3:2

”

# A CHURCH TO 'CONNECT' PEOPLE TO THE GOD WHO LOVES THEM

*Amanda Martin*

## MEMBER AT CONNECT@ TIVIOT DALE, AMANDA MARTIN, SHARES THE VISION AND IMPACT OF THIS CHURCH PLANT IN STOCKPORT, GREATER MANCHESTER.

### HOW DID CONNECT COME TO BE?

Connect@Tiviot Dale began as a seed that was sown in Panama - I know that sounds a bit unlikely, but it's the truth! The Revd Luiz Cardoso, now Pastor at Connect, met the Mission Enabler from the Manchester and Stockport District, the Revd Rod Hill, at an International Conference in Panama in 2017 and as a result of their conversations there, it became apparent that the vision that they would share for planting a church, would be realised in Stockport.

After much prayer and consideration, the congregation, who had been faithful witnesses at Tiviot Dale for many years, gifted their building to a small, multinational group of church planters, who had until that time been working in Oldham. Since then the amazing journey has continued to unfold, and Connect has been the means of sharing God's blessing with many people.

Planting a church is a huge challenge! There has to be vision, and that vision has to be rooted in God's purpose and plan. There has to be a determination to share the gospel, fully and unashamedly,

with those who have not yet heard it. In addition to this, there has to be commitment from everyone involved, to try things without being afraid of failure, to build on things that work and to let go of things that don't seem right. Throughout the journey there has to be faithful witness and service, and a willingness to walk by faith, because so often the future is unclear and what seems to be impossible has to become reality for the plant to thrive. In short, Jesus has to be at the centre and not on the fringes of every move that the planting team makes.

Of course, there are many other challenges that come along with being a planted church and there is always a need for discipline and an interrogation of what we do to make sure that we are continuing to trust in God. Pastor Luiz is always reminding us that we are not a place for perfect people, but for those who are broken, struggling with sin and wanting to grow - no church can be perfect and we don't try to pretend that we are.

We try to be honest about our personal failings and when we find it difficult to deal with or agree with each other, we ask God to help us to remember that it is his will, not what we like or want that matters - we are not a club, we are a church who is trying to meet the challenges that face us with the wisdom and word of God - sometimes that brings us into conflict with each other and with the wider church.

### WHAT IS THE VISION OF THE CHURCH AT CONNECT?

At Connect we say that we 'Belong, Believe, Become' and this condensed 'mission statement' is an important signpost for those who may have very little, or very traumatic experience of 'church'. I have, from the first time I heard it, loved the name 'Connect' because it says everything that needs to be said about what the purpose of the church is. It exists to help people to 'Connect' to God, through Jesus, so that they can come to know the transforming power of his love. It exists to 'Connect' people to each other, to learn what it is to work for the Kingdom together; it exists to work with people as they discover their identity in Christ, to support them as they answer the individual callings that God makes on their lives. Wrapped up in all of this, is the urgency of the gospel, the urgency of the work of sharing that gospel and a belief that we are the people that God is equipping in this time and place to do that work.

### A PLACE OF TESTIMONY TO BEING TRANSFORMED THROUGH KNOWING JESUS CHRIST

I was not part of the church from its earliest days. Before I came to Connect I had been part of the same church family all my life, but I felt that God was asking me to leave what was comfortable and familiar and the church to which he sent me was Connect. Since the first time I felt called to be part of the church family there, I believe that God has been opening my eyes and



waking me up! It has been a challenging time that has led me away from the heart of Circuit Leadership to the edge of the church, where the focus is on people who are only just coming to Jesus. There is so much to learn, and to be truthful so much to 'unlearn' about what it is to be church. I often feel out of my depth, but I know that in these moments I am getting closer to the true grittiness of the gospel and I believe that this helps me to keep relying on God, and to keep moving ever closer to him.

Of course, I am one very small part of this story - the impact of what God is doing in, at and through Connect is a narrative that is being written every day through the people who God sends to us; often, these people have found themselves to be struggling with addiction, relationship difficulties, homelessness and poverty and are searching for something to bring real meaning to life. Some people come and stay, some are with us for a short time, but this is not for us to be concerned about, it is for the Spirit to direct each life; the job of the church is simply to seek ways to share the message, to worship and respond to God's blessings and to support people as they take their first steps with Christ.

### FINDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Since we began in April 2018, we have been witness to thirty Baptisms and in the early summer of 2019, the church began to offer two times of worship on a Sunday instead of just the one. Our dedicated worship team and the preachers who have served us have been amazing in this time, helping us to offer the best that we can to God, in worship every Sunday.

The worship atmosphere is lively and joyful, the emphasis is on the certain hope which comes with accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and accepting the freely given grace and mercy of God. Every message given aims to help people relate to God and to respond. Our multinational nature is a great



blessing, and each service is conducted and/or translated in both English and Brazilian Portuguese.

We take the practise of hospitality very seriously with opportunities to share a meal together, and a ministry dedicated to welcome being just two ways in which we seek to show people that they are loved and welcome in God's house.

Teaching and learning for people of all ages is an important part of the life that we share at Connect - each week we have the opportunity to meet for cell groups to study and pray together; we have just begun to use 'Zoom' - a conferencing platform which allows those people who are unable to be at the group in person, to join in on-line. The Youth and Children have their own meetings which aim to help them to walk with Jesus and we have the 'ConnectBelieve' website where people can learn about the fundamental truths that Connect is built upon. In January we held our first 'Encountering God' Day. This was a full day of learning, listening to God and sharing, that truly touched the lives of those who came. It was amazing to see what God can do in just a few hours, when we give him our full attention!

Other opportunities to learn and explore have come through the 'Her' and 'Shine' Conferences. These were times of holy conversation, encouragement and learning about our own identity in God and the mission that he calls us to carry out in his name. Sessions called 'Taking off' are offered for those who are ready to explore more deeply either some aspect of the Bible or of serving God as a member of the church.

We aim to bless those who are in social need - at the Bridge Project we aim to 'Bridge the gap' for people who find themselves in need. This ministry is very important to us and we are always looking for ways to develop it. We provide a hearty free breakfast and a listening ear to those who God brings to

us each week. There is a simple message at each of these sessions and always an opportunity to talk with the Bridge worker and volunteers for support through Acts, the Foodbank or Christians against Poverty. We have recently completed the CAP Life Skills Course with our CAP trained Bridge worker - this group was a blessing to all those who participated.

God is giving us a heart for helping the homeless with some of our members offering support and prayer on the streets; we also have food and clothing donated by Tesco through 'Fareshare' to bless those in need. We do not have the answers to all the problems that people may find themselves experiencing but we are determined to reflect God's love as much as possible. We never hide the reason for what we do - it is to share Jesus, and all the glory goes to him.

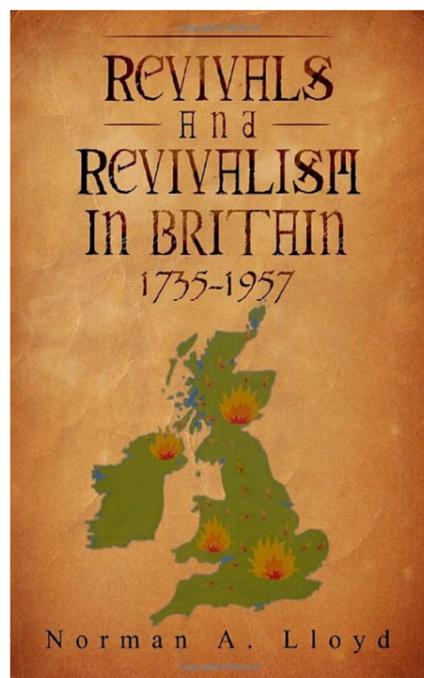
I think it is because of this approach to being church that I would want to conclude by saying that when I put the last full stop on this article, it won't be long before it is out of date, because things change all the time! I think that this is what we need to aspire to more often as churches; not happy to keep the status quo, not resting in what has been good so far; not clinging to what has always happened even when it is no longer relevant, but always looking for what God is doing next and joining in with it.

It seems to me that being part of the church family at Connect means taking this verse from Isaiah 43:19 seriously, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Amanda Martin (right) is a member of Connect Church in Stockport which was planted twenty months ago.



# RESOURCE REVIEWS



## REVIVALS AND REVIVALISM IN BRITAIN 1735-1957

*Norman A Lloyd*

Acorn Independent Press Ltd, 2018,  
PP 310, £9.99,  
ISBN 978-1-912145-91-1

The author was ordained in 1954 as the Minister of a Welsh Baptist Church. He has written on a number of historical

subjects and has a particular, prayerful interest in the history of Revivals, having been the minister of a church in Wales that had known Revival, and whose members had experienced Revival. Many years have passed since Britain experienced such a spiritual awakening and the memory of them has been largely lost. This book reminds us of what God has done in the past and for Christian Churches and all Christians to pray in the words of the Psalmist, "Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you?" Psalm 85:6 NIV

The book is written in four sections:

One: Revival in the Eighteenth Century covering 1735-1790 Revival in Wales; Methodist 1738-1790 Revival in England and in 1742 Scotland's Revival in Cambuslang.

Two: 1859 Revival in the Nineteenth Century covering Revival in Northern Ireland; 1859 Revival in Wales; 1859 Revival in England and Scotland.

Three: Revival in the Twentieth Century covering 1904-5 Revival in Wales; 1921 Revival in South East England; The 1949-1957 Hebrides Revival (in my lifetime!) As a young lad I heard about it and read reports of the ministry of Duncan Campbell and the power of prayer. Duncan Campbell wrote: "Revival is a going of God among His people, and an awareness of God laying hold of the community, the fear of God lays hold upon the community, moving men and

women, who until then had no concern for spiritual things, to seek after God."

Four: Revival and Revivalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century covering Early Primitive Methodist Camp Meetings and Later Revivalism; The Revival Campaigns of Finney and Moody; Is it possible to promote a revival.

God has greatly blessed our land in the past, even in the darkest and most desperate times, in answer to the earnest prayers of his people. This book shares many examples of such prayer. One of the leaders of the 1735-1790 Welsh Revival spent 25 years in prayer for Revival and before the 1742 Revival in Scotland a great man of prayer interceded with God for 8 hours of the day and night in prayer for Revival. The year before the Revival in Northern Ireland 1859 thousands began gathering in hundreds of prayer meetings for the spread of Revival.

Before the 1949-57 Hebrides Revival for 3 months seven church elders decided to spend several nights a week from 10 pm to 4 or 5 am in prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Unknown to them two godly sisters had a similar burden and for months they spent 3 nights a week in earnest prayer for the young people of the island of Lewis and for the people in each cottage in their village.

This quote from the 1904-5 Revival in Wales sums up the importance of prayer

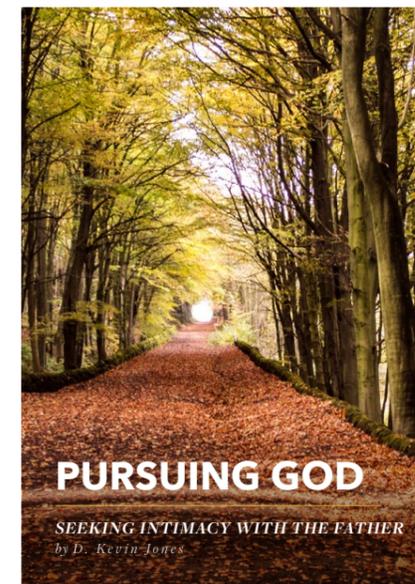
for Revival: "the Land was covered by a canopy of prayer and people everywhere hungered for more of God's presence and power."

There was also a great desire for Bible Study and Biblical teaching as a preparation for Revival. During these times of Revival in our nation millions were converted and over just 2 years of Revival 2 million converts were added to the nation's churches. 200,000 members were added to the Methodist Church through Revival. A quote "The difficulty used to be to get people into the church, but the difficulty now is to get them out of it". But, another feature of the Revival was the earnest desire of those who became Christians to win others for Christ. In fact it was they, perhaps, more than the preaching of the ministers, who spread the Revival and won the great majority of converts through their prayers and zealous witness.

DL Moody at his London meetings had to appeal to Christians to stop attending and occupying seats but rather to go out and bring in the unconverted. He also said: "You've had enough pulpit preaching; what we want now is personal witness, individuals going to people and pressing on them the claims of Christ." J Edwin Orr writes in one of his papers on Revival: "Revival produces an extraordinary burden of prayer, an unusual conviction of sin, an uncanny sense of the presence of God, resulting in repentance, confession, reconciliation and restitution, with great concern for the salvation of people near and far away."

I have often said in my own teaching ministry "we cannot organise an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Revival but we can desire it, pray for it both individually and corporately." I believe this book will encourage this desire and prayer for Revival. I commend it to you.

*Reviewed by David Greenaway who is a Supernumerary Minister in the Derby Circuit. Formerly, he was a Minister in the Evangelical Free Churches, the International Director of One Step Forward Ministries and Publications and Vice Chair of the British Church Growth Association.*



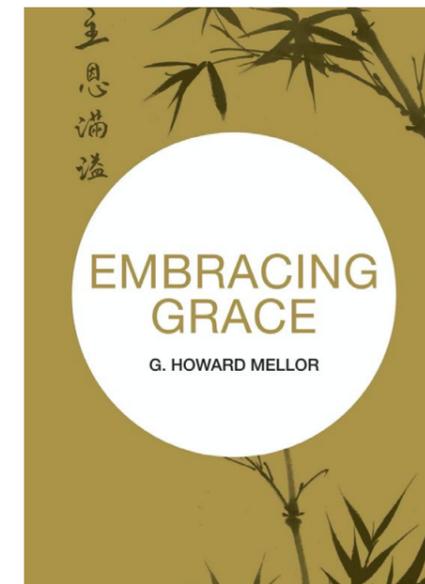
## PURSUING GOD: SEEKING INTIMACY WITH THE FATHER

*D. Kevin Jones*

MET Pub 2019, pp106, £6.00  
ISBN 978-0-86071-813-0  
Available via the MET website.

This book is both practical and theological: in Part One Kevin explores the practice of Pursuing God, and in Part Two he looks at the theology of this. Even though the subtitle is 'Seeking Intimacy with the Father', Kevin inspires a closer and deeper relationship with all three persons of the Holy Trinity. The book starts by encouraging readers to desire intimacy with God and then explores how humility, repentance, holiness and grace helps this to be a greater reality within our lives. It continues by explaining how this has been made possible through the Son of God dying to make atonement for our sin. Through the work of the cross we can experience wonderful closeness to God day by day, which is just a foretaste of enjoying intimacy with God forever in glorious heaven.

*Reviewed by The Revd Derek Balsdon who is a Methodist Presbyter, and serves as the MET Development Worker.*



## EMBRACING GRACE

*G. Howard Mellor*

MET Pub 2019, pp58, £4.50  
ISBN 978-0-86071-797-3  
Available via the MET website

Embracing Grace is a series of four Bible studies about the Christian understanding of grace.

In a winsome and accessible way, Howard Mellor introduces some of the central themes of Christian faith. Written from a Wesleyan and Methodist perspective, and drawing upon insights from ministry in a number of different cultures, Embracing Grace will be a blessing to all Christians, using to a great effect reflection, study and group material which will encourage and deepen your discipleship of Christ.

*Reviewed by The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins who is the Superintendent Minister of Methodist Central Hall, Westminster.*

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# PRAYING ALWAYS



This will be my last praying always and it will be somewhat different. This quarter we simply ask our readers to come in repentance and faith, and pray for REVIVAL. God can revive personally, congregationally, locally, regionally and nationally. I do not know what he will do, but I do know that I need reviving. The guidance for our prayers comes from 2 Chronicles 7:14.

A Prayer: 'Dear Father, in your love you raised up the Methodist Church, to be a people of Holiness and righteousness, bringing revival to the land. We thank you for all you did for our ancestors. Today we stand in ruins, a remnant of what we once were, and even now we have not turned back to you. We have disobeyed your word; we no longer preach repentance, or believe in Scriptural Holiness. We are no longer making disciples. We confess, with deep sorrow, that we have turned from Your truth, to follow the plans of humankind, rather than the guidance of your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, cleans us from all our unrighteousness, and turn again in mercy to us. Pour out you Holy Spirit once again and revive us. May your presence be known among us, and your salvation once more be shared throughout our nation. Holy Spirit come, though the blood forgives us, and once more bless the Methodist people.' Amen.



*2 Chronicles 7:14 'If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.'*



1 What can we learn from 2 Chronicles 7:14? The first word is **'If'** and the word 'if,' is a conditional word. If we see the need of our church, if we see the need of our heart, only then will we begin to pray. If we think we are OK, we will not pray for revival. [If we rely on other things our wisdom, our strength, our plans, our church systems, we will not pray.] The first thing is to be aware of is our need. Revival starts with realisation.

2 My people who are **'called by My name.'** God is specific here, it is not the world, or government, who need to change it is his Church. Again, the initiative is in our hands, God is willing, if we are willing.

3 **humble themselves:** The first step humility, not prayer. Repentance and humility must walk together, we need a right assessment of ourselves. We are not called to organise ourselves, or challenge ourselves, galvanise ourselves, rebuke ourselves, blame ourselves, encourage ourselves, or train ourselves. We are called to humble ourselves before God and his word. No humility no revival.

## WHAT IS HUMILITY?

It is measuring ourselves against God's word, and seeing that his word is true and we must change. Isaiah 66:2 **"This is the one I esteem:** he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." **Humility is the opposite of pride,** and pride will always stop God moving. (We can have Pride in our Church, Pride in our Abilities, Pride in our Plans, Pride in our History. 1 Peter 5:5 'All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" Christ humbled himself to walk among us, we must humble ourselves to walk with Christ.

Humility is a right assessment of ourselves. We acknowledge our need and our weakness, the failure of our church, our sin and we come before him in an attitude of confession and loving dependence.

4 And pray, God tells his people to pray. Hosea 10:12 'Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, for it is **time to seek the LORD,** Till he comes and rains righteousness on you.' We don't often think prayer is important. James tells us it is our first port of call. 'You do not have because **you do not ask.** You ask and do not receive, because **you ask amiss,** that you may spend it on your pleasures.' James 4:2-3.

Prayer is the challenge of humbly **asking God directly to intervene.** I do not know if God will revive the nation that is a mystery known to God. However, I can come in humility and seek him till he **revives me.** I can call on God with others from my church till he turns and leaves a blessing Joel 2:14.

5 'And seek my face'. His face is different than his power. Exodus 33:18-20 Moses said, **"show me your Glory,"** God replies "you cannot **see my face**". Yet we behold the face of God through the Spirit, in the face of Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 3:13, 18). 2 Corinthians 4:6 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' Seeking God's face is, seeking **his presence,** revival is nothing more, and nothing less than an outpouring of the presence of God, and his presence is Holy.

6 'And turn from their wicked ways'. **Repentance** and Holiness go together. This is not a legalistic holiness, but a love-based holiness. Only God's presence can drive out sin. We cannot 'pray like heaven and live like hell.' We cannot live in opposition to the plain commands of his Word and expect his blessing. If we want God's presence, we do not want sin. We cannot compromise, or rationalise, we need to seek our hearts till we turn from anything that is not godly. Confession, humility, repentance and holiness are irrevocably joined.

## REVIVAL IS FOR THE THIRSTY SOUL.

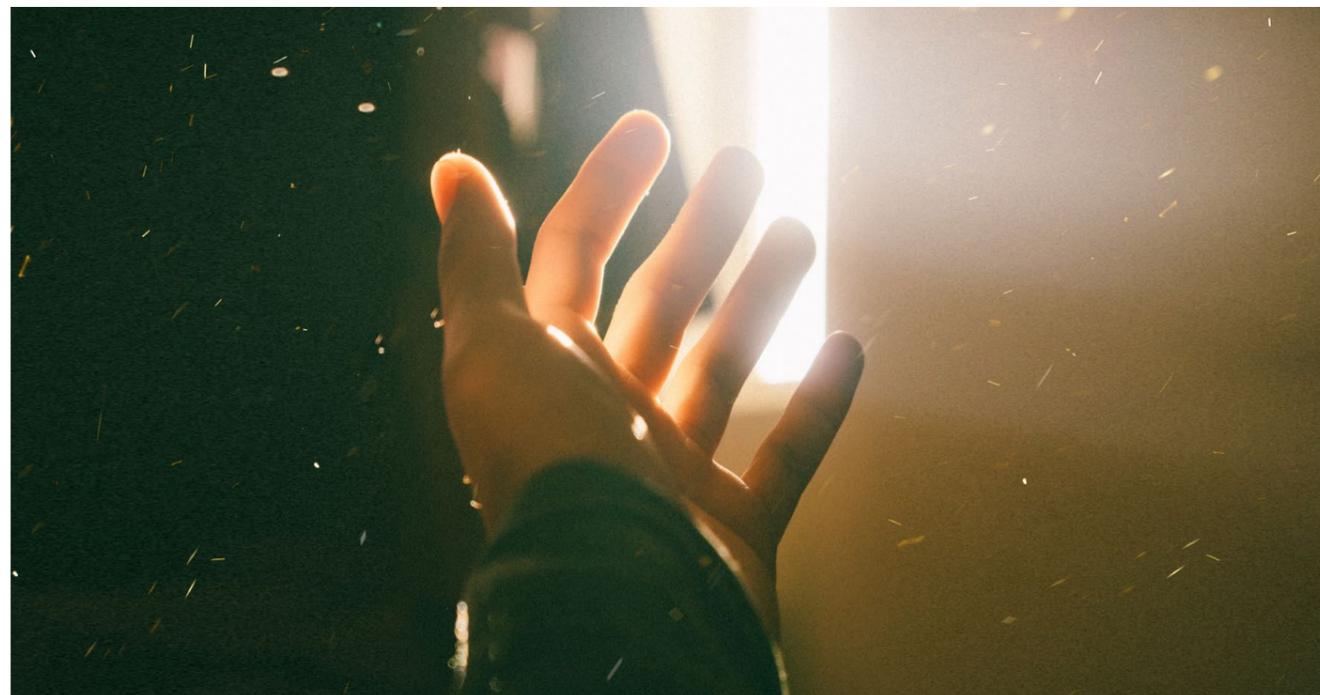
We will not have revival till nothing else will do.

When we do these things, God says, "Then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." He has promised: "I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring." Isaiah 44:3 NKJV.

During these months of deep challenge for our Church and our Nation, let us pray, 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.' Isaiah 64:1

For Israel the promised blessings were physical, a good harvest, safety prosperity, and victory. For us as the Church they are spiritual. Souls saved, Christ honoured, communities changed, God's presence restored, holiness lived and experienced. If we want revival, personal, local or national, God has told us what to do. **"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,** then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Revd Kevin D Jones is a former Superintendent Minister of the Gornal and Sedgley Circuit



# REMAINING FAITHFUL RESOURCES

**REMAINING  
FAITHFUL**  
www.remainingfaithful.network

A network of Methodists committed to remaining faithful to the original Wesleyan evangelical vision, and to the biblical and apostolic understanding of marriage as the life-long union of one man and one woman and the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy.

To join, please contact Marian Izzard:  
admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk | 01983 642024  
We welcome individuals, churches and circuits

For resources and details of regional events and our national conference, visit the website:  
www.remainingfaithful.network

## RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION - LAST CHANCE!

The Marriage and Relationships Connexional Consultation is now underway. Please take every opportunity to contribute.

Please ask your Superintendent who your District Synod representatives are and write to them, setting out your views and asking them to be represented in every way during the consultation, and write in the same way to your Minister, Superintendent and District Chair.

## REMAINING FAITHFUL RESOURCES

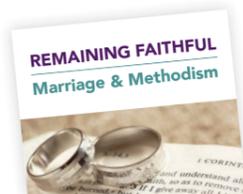
For Remaining Faithful Resources, please visit  
www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/remaining-faithful  
or contact Derek Balsdon: 01260 297609 or  
development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk

### REMAINING FAITHFUL STUDY GUIDE

A 20 page study guide for individuals and groups to help explore biblical texts and theological issues concerning marriage and relationships

### REMAINING FAITHFUL LEAFLET

A 4 page leaflet encouraging Methodists to the biblical and traditional view of marriage and relationships



### SPEAKING FAITHFULLY

MET's response to the current Marriage and Relationships Connexional Consultation

### FAITHFUL LISTENING

MET's response to the 2019 Conference report, 'God in Love Unites Us'

### WRITING FAITHFULLY

Suggestions for responding to the Connexional conversation

### STAYING FAITHFUL

MET's message to Synod and Conference representatives.

# Transformed Ministries

"Sexuality is probably one of the most prevalent topics of conversation in our culture, and because our culture endorses values that are very different from Christian values, we must engage in the conversation"

## SUPPORTING CHURCHES WITH BIBLICAL TEACHING ON SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Built on her personal experience of finding freedom from same sex attraction, Sarah of Transformed Ministries, will speak at your church to whole congregations, youth groups or small groups. All talks are tailor made to your specific congregational needs and are based on solid Biblical teaching. Contact us today to book a speaking date.



email: tbgministry@gmail.com

Find us on  
**Facebook**

@transformedbygodslove

www.transformedbygodslove.com

## EXPLORING ISSUES OF SEXUALITY?

For anyone who wants to better understand the topic of sexuality and faith, the book 'Transformed by God's Love' is now available to purchase via our website



www.transformedbygodslove.com or is available on Amazon



## REMAINING FAITHFUL: MOVING FORWARD

Saturday 18 July 2020

11.00 am - 4.00 pm (Coffee from 10.30 am)

An opportunity to debate the practicalities, options and ways forward for those committed to remaining faithful to the Wesleyan evangelical mission and the teaching of the Bible.

**Freshbrook Church, Swindon SN5 8NU**

1 mile from Jctn 16 on M4 (free parking) & good bus connections from Swindon station

Bring a packed lunch (tea & coffee provided)

This event is free of charge but please register your place at [methodistevangelicals.org.uk/movingforward](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk/movingforward)  
phone 01983 642024  
or email [admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

**REMAINING  
FAITHFUL**  
www.remainingfaithful.network



## AN EXTENDED MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

# REMAINING FAITHFUL IN THE YEAR AHEAD

*The Revd Dr David A. Hull*

Dear Friends,

My mind has returned repeatedly, over recent months, to a charcoal fire. I have written previously, within the pages of MET Connexion, about the encounter between Peter and the risen Lord Jesus, one of my favourite scenes in the Bible. Peter had recently denied his Lord three times and now he had swum, fully clothed, to greet him once again. After breakfast with his disciples, there was one person to whom Jesus wanted to speak and one question he wanted to ask: 'Peter, do you love me?' Three times the Lord asked the question, once for each denial. Then, when Peter had restated his love for the Lord, Jesus called him again, with the familiar words, 'Follow me.'

I often wonder whether Peter looked around when he heard those words and realised where they were standing. They were on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius, otherwise known as the Sea of Galilee. It was the place where Jesus had first called Peter to follow him three years previously with the very same words. Jesus had taken him back to where it all began.

### GOING BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

I have certainly had a sense of going back to where it all began recently. Many readers will know that my family and I have been through a very tough time since September and we are immensely grateful to MET members who have written

to encourage us and have given generous gifts. It is those circumstances that have delayed this edition of our magazine reaching you. Thank you for your patience.

Following Conference, I was interviewed, as Chair of MET, by members of the Christian press who asked for my response to the votes on the report 'God in Love Unites Us'. The Conference had overwhelmingly, albeit provisionally, voted to affirm cohabitation and same-sex marriage. I stated that I was saddened by the vote; that MET holds that the gospel is for all; that part of the good news is God's purposes for marriage as the life-long union of one man and one woman and the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy; and that any other understanding undermines the gospel.

That statement was later quoted online and was subsequently circulated amongst the staff, pupil and parent bodies at the Methodist school at which I was stationed as chaplain. The response very quickly made my position within the school utterly untenable and, after much consideration and conversation, I agreed to seek an early curtailment to the appointment. The situation continued to go from bad to worse and, as a family, we faced an impossible situation in which we looked set to lose, not only our base for ministry, but also our income and home.

In the midst of it all, I had a routine meeting with leaders of the Free Methodist Church and, naturally, we spoke of the trials I was facing. To my astonishment, they approached me a little while later with the offer of a post: associate pastor of their church plant in Kingswood: Freedom Church Bristol (which began a little over a year ago) with a commitment to enable me to continue to serve as Chair of MET.

By that time, I had already arranged an appointment with the Stationing Advisory Committee in an attempt to find a way forward. With the offer from the Free Methodist Church, I was able to request permission from the committee to serve another denomination whilst remaining a minister in Full Connexion with the British Methodist Church. After a very supportive conversation, they recommended that I be granted the permission and the President subsequently wrote to me to ratify the decision. My family and I are immensely grateful both to the Free Methodist Church for their warm and generous welcome and to the Stationing Advisory Committee for their expression of Christian unity.

We have known the truth of Paul's great claim that 'in all things, God works for the good of those who love him' and, perhaps like Peter, I have a sense of going back to where it all began. It has been wonderful to discover, in the Free Methodist Church, fellow Wesleyan evangelicals who are committed to the Wesleyan mission with their three distinctive characteristics of Arminianism (the gospel is for all); mission as evangelism and social action together; and seeking to be Spirit-led and Spirit-filled. Our first Sunday in the new role at Freedom Church Bristol found us in the open-air of Kingswood Park for our monthly outreach event, so we really have gone back to where it all began for the Methodist movement in the open-air of the fields of Kingswood!

### RENEWING THE WESLEYAN MISSION

As I write from Kingswood, the mother suburb of the mother city of Methodism, I continue to sense the Lord is calling

evangelical Methodists, at this critical time within the life of our denomination, to play our part in **renewing the Wesleyan mission in the motherland of Methodism**. I believe the Lord is calling us all to go back to where it all began. What a mission it was: raised up, we believe, in the providence of God, returning to faithful, scriptural Christianity.

That's what our forthcoming Spring Remaining Faithful conference is all about, **Liverpool 200: Renewing the Wesleyan Vision**. It marks the 200th anniversary of the 1820 Liverpool Conference, a historic event at which the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, concerned that the denomination was beginning to decline, launched a turnaround plan which changed the course of the denomination for a generation. If a turnaround plan was needed then, just think what we need now!

What will it mean to go back to where it all began? It's a question we will be considering as we gather in Liverpool, seeking a renewal of the Wesleyan vision. The current debates within the Methodist Church are the presenting issue, but they are not the defining issue. What defines us, binds us together and spurs us on in the work of the kingdom is far greater. We will look back to the great defining features of the evangelical mission of the Wesley brothers and the early Methodists as the power of God fell mightily upon them, changing the course of this nation. We will ask what the implications of that great vision are for us today as we seek to join in the work of building the kingdom in our own day and age: what does it mean for our ministry and mission of evangelism, discipleship, worship, preaching, work amongst children and young people, church planting, and social engagement? We will turn to the Lord in repentance, seek a fresh vision from him, and plead for an outpouring of his mighty power. I do hope you will join us on 28 and 29 May at Hope University's Hope Chapel in Liverpool. Please book as soon as you can!

In the meantime, as we have outlined in our Remaining Faithful regional gatherings, we have a very simple three-point strategy. Please do everything you can to play your part:

- 1. Speak out.** The Lord called Ezekiel to speak his word to the people of Israel, even though they would not listen. Faithfulness is about what you say, not whether they listen. So please take every opportunity to contribute to the consultation.
- 2. Build up.** The Bible calls us to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. Within the current debates, we are rediscovering the importance of standing together with a common vision. That's what our Spring Remaining Faithful conference is all about, Liverpool 200: Renewing the Wesleyan Vision. Join us to begin a conversation, to be inspired, to pray together and to see how great a flame aspires!
- 3. Count the cost.** There comes a time when the people of God must count the cost of faithfulness. One phrase that is often on my mind at the moment is from Rudyard Kipling's poem, 'If', which I learned when I was at school: 'If you can make one heap of all your winnings and risk it on one turn of pitch and toss, and lose, and start again at your beginnings and never breath a word about your loss ...'. Pitch and toss may not be a very Methodist pastime! Yet, in that line, Kipling powerfully describes what the cost of faithfulness may be. My wife and I have, in recent events and unlike ever before, known the risk of losing our place

of ministry, home and income with shocking swiftness. Others may well find themselves in very similar situations. Now is the time to count the cost, as generations of God's people have done before us, and to discover again the faithfulness of the Lord.

### MOVING FORWARD

Seeking a renewal of the Wesleyan vision as we gather in Liverpool is, however, only the first stage in going back to where it all began. We will gather again, after Conference, on Saturday 18 July 2020 (venue to be confirmed) for a second conference: **Remaining Faithful: Moving Forward**. Please put the date in your diary now and plan to join us if you can. Having sought a renewal of vision in May, we will give our attention to policy in July, with an opportunity to debate the practicalities of, and options for, ways forward for those committed to remaining faithful to the Wesleyan evangelical mission and the teaching of the Bible. By that point, we will have an idea both of where we sense the Lord is calling us to go in terms of vision, and where we are in terms of the decisions of the Methodist Conference which will have met in early July. That means we will be able to begin an informed discussion about how we will be able to get from where we are to where we long to be as we seek to play our part in renewing the Wesleyan mission in the motherland of Methodism.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, we may wish we had a much more certain knowledge of the path that lies in front of us. However, that is often not the way it is with the people of God and it is certainly not the way it was at the beginnings of Methodism. John Wesley wrote of 'desiring barely to follow Providence as it gradually opens'. It was a journey they knew only step by step, seeking to follow God's prevenient grace as he went ahead of them. They struggled to keep up with him! Yet, they also had utter confidence that following step by step was all they needed to do. They ended each annual conference by singing Charles Wesley's hymn, 'Captain of Israel's host, and guide' which includes the triumphant lines:

'By thine unerring Spirit led, / We shall not in the desert stray; / We shall not full direction need; / Nor miss our providential way!'

As we, in turn, seek to follow providence as it gradually opens to us, we dare to proceed with the same confidence.

There has been much that has been unexpected for my family about the way in which this year has begun and there is much uncertainty for many of us in what lies ahead. Yet I enter this year excited by the vision that lies before us of renewing the Wesleyan mission in the motherland of Methodism. We're going back to where it all began. If it's a vision you share, come to Liverpool 200. I hope to see you there!

I usually sign off rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel and, whilst I continue to rejoice, I feel I also wish to conclude, with a prayer that the Lord will keep us all faithful throughout the year ahead,

Yours faithfully,

*David*



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